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SUBJECT: FIJI ROADMAP TO DEMOCRACY LEADS NOWHERE

REF: Suva 61

¶1. (U) On July 1, Fiji strongman Bainimarama gave a national address entitled "Fiji's Strategic Framework for Change" (text provided septel). Bainimarama outlined his regime's plans to establish a new constitution for Fiji by September 2013 and to lead the country to "true democratic, non-communal, equal suffrage-based" parliamentary elections in September 2014. Bainimarama noted that he would continue Fiji's Public Emergency Regulations (curbing speech and press freedoms and prohibiting political assembly) and gave no indication when they would be lifted. Bainimarama promised to begin an "extensive" and "candid" conversation with all stakeholders regarding Fiji's future constitution -- but not until September 2012. Until then, the government would focus on Fiji's economy.

¶2. (SBU) In response to Bainimarama's roadmap announcement, the Embassy suggests the following press guidance for use by the Department spokesperson:

Begin Text:

-- The United States recognizes the desire for political reform in Fiji and supports any progress that hastens Fiji's return to a constitution and free elections.

-- The Roadmap falls short of that goal. It delays the process leading to elections and is imposed without the true participation or consent of the Fijian people.

End Text.

13. (SBU) COMMENT: The Roadmap confirms that Bainimarama plans to hold onto power for as long as possible. We will continue our policy (reftel) of engaging with all Fijian parties to promote genuine dialogue expediting Fiji's return to democracy.